

New Jersey
Visual and Performing Arts Framework



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FRAMEWORK



NEW JERSEY VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

*A Document in Support of the
Core Curriculum Content Standards
in the Visual and Performing Arts*

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Historical Background

On May 1, 1996, the State Board of Education adopted a set of *Core Curriculum Content Standards* in seven content areas along with a set of *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* that apply to all subject areas. Since the adoption of these standards, frameworks have been developed to assist local districts in the implementation of the standards. The New Jersey State Department of Education and its corporate partner, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, convened a task force in June 1997 composed of distinguished K-12 educators, higher education representatives, and professionals in the arts. This task force was charged with designing a *Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum Framework* for New Jersey.

The intent of this Framework is to support the educational content reform in arts education that was initiated by the *New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Core Curriculum Content Standards* and to generate higher levels of achievement for all students in arts education.

All learning takes place through the senses, sharpened and honed through active engagement in dance, music, theater, and visual arts. Our memories are stored and accessed in the mind through our perceptions of sounds, smells, tastes, images, sounds, and kinesthetics. Thought processes in creative arts are continuously practiced: observation, divergent thinking, analysis, synthesis, and reflection. Art-making requires keen awareness, total immersion, and the thoughtful habit of framing problems and finding solutions, using appropriate media and technology. The present sensory overload from electronic media demands that students be highly perceptive and able to differentiate reality from virtual reality.

The arts are a catalyst for curriculum integration and learning. This was the fundamental premise behind New Jersey's recent adoption of the arts as one of the seven core academic subjects. Arts education provides students with opportunities to develop creative, expressive skills and enjoy active participation as doer and critical/analytical viewer. Productions of music, theater and dance require not only individual skills, but cooperative effort. A challenging arts education program provides a constructivist, experiential education—just right for the school-to-career transition.

Knowing the Difference Makes the Difference

The purpose of the Visual and Performing Arts Standards is to improve student achievement in arts *education*, not arts-as-entertainment, not art-assembly projects, not art-as-activity. An education in the arts requires curricular scope and sequence and the intellectual rigor of experiential learning. The *Visual and Performing Arts Standards* require that all students at the elementary level experience arts education in all four arts disciplines: dance, music, theater, and visual arts. As students become selective in their preferred form of artistic expression at the middle and high school levels, they are expected to *gain expertise in dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts*.

Not all art-related experiences should be considered *arts education*. Please note the differences among the following definitions.

- **Arts Education:** An integral, sequential curricular program of knowledge and skills to be acquired and applied.
- **Arts Enrichment:** Part of an educational program (e.g., a field trip to a museum or gallery, the opera or concert) related to the curriculum.
- **Arts Entertainment:** Viewing for diversion or amusement: movies, videos, television, performances, or the like.
- **Arts Exposure:** A new experience with the arts, such as a demonstration, lecture, or performance by an artist.

This Framework provides guidance for infusion of the arts, workplace readiness, and cognitive skills standards, for selected indicators, in delivery instruction. It is not intended to be a substitute for the district curriculum in the arts; the *sample activities* that are included are intended simply as ideas to help educators revamp or recreate their own activities in support of the standards. The *Framework* is designed as a toolbox to gain easy access to methods for implementation of the standards and indicators. The standards have specified the results but not the means of achieving them, affirming the importance of local district decision and discretion. Each district knows best which curriculum designs and instructional strategies are most appropriate for its students. The activities included are to be considered merely as examples and are not mandated.

The framework developers for the Visual and Performing Arts sought a format that was succinct and user friendly. Several hundred educators reviewed this document and acclaimed that these goals were met

Tools to broaden the students thinking skills are found in Chapter 1. Knowledge of cognitive styles and levels creates and enables the flexibility for each student to be provided with challenging work based on individual ability level and learning styles. Chapter 1 is intended to inform teaching and learning about cognitive development, a requirement of the Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards. Providing each student with challenging work based on individual ability level and learning style is possible only with in-depth knowledge of cognition. To whet the appetite for additional research in metacognition, an overview of several cognitive theories are included:

- A comparison of right and left brain functions and approaches to a task;
- A description of multiple intelligences, as identified by Howard Gardner;
- A listing of instructional verbs and products categorized according to Bloom's taxonomy;
- A description of the factors and behaviors that contribute to creative thinking; and
- A description and samples of systems thinking: the ability to think through processes, practices and projects.

Educators are encouraged to investigate other theories and research on the brain, the mind, the senses, and metacognition. Several grids reflect the connections between the arts and various thinking skills, levels, and other subject areas. Blank grids are provided for district level teachers to brainstorm their own connections. Grids or tables for the teachers' use when brainstorming similar activities are included in the chapter. See the tables listed below to view these samples.

- Table 1.1 (p. 9) suggests arts projects that challenge the various intelligences described by Howard Gardner.
- Table 1.2 (p. 10) for teacher use in designing arts studio assignments
- Table 1.3 (p. 11) Bloom's taxonomy
- Table 1.4 (p. 13) suggests activities for systems thinking in the arts

For easy reference, when developing curriculum and lesson plans, the six *Arts Standards* are listed in Table 2.1 (p. 17) and Table 2.2 (p. 18) contains a "short phrase" list of the *Workplace Readiness Standards*. Suggestions for integrating the accompanying indicators in the arts curriculum are presented in Table 2.3 (p. 21); and Table 2.4 (p. 22) is a blank grid for teacher use to brainstorm related activities. The second half of Chapter 2 focuses on the use of technology in arts education, providing guidance for the implementation of the second workplace readiness standard.

The Activities Section (Chapter 3) provides instruction for the use and purpose of the suggested activities. It is important that it be understood that the activities designed to meet the standards and indicators are merely suggested and not required. Teachers may adopt, adapt or replace them with ideas of their own. Design education is highlighted to alert curriculum developers and teachers to the requirements of Standard 1.6 in all of the arts. To further assist arts educators in the implementation of design in classroom instruction, Chapter 4 explains the process of design and a number of instructional topics, thematically linked. The arts disciplines of dance, music, theater and visual arts have their own introductory statements so that they can be distributed with the individual sections to the appropriate specialists. **Some adaptations for special populations are provided in Chapter 5.** Experts in the education of the specific populations provided the input for these adaptations.